SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

Host plants of the Pale Mottled Willow *Paradrina clavipalpis* (Scop.) (Lepidoptera: Noctuidae). – With reference to Len Winokur's communication (2007) about finding a larva of *P. clavipalpis* within a spun leaf of goat willow *Salix caprea*, near Winchester (VC 12), one needs to decide whether it is a realistic food plant or not.

The Victorian, Edwardian and pre-war II lepidopterists, not having the advantages of ultra-violet light to find species, had to rely mainly on fieldwork. Scorer (1913) listed Poaceae (grasses), *Pisum* (pea) and seeds of *Plantago* (plantains). Allan (1949), a renowned fieldworker and author, listed *Plantago* spp., *Stellaria media* (chickweed), *Triticum vulgare* (wheat), on the grains and *Pisum sativum* (field pea), on the seeds. I have beaten and searched *Salix* at a number of sites in VC 11 and 12 (Dobson, 1989) where *P. clavipalpis* imagines have occurred at light, but never found the larvae on bushes or trees. I think it is evident that *P. clavipalpis* is not arboreal and that *Salix* is not its food plant and that it is simply a 'tourist' i.e. a non-predatory species that has no lasting association with the plant, but may be attracted for shelter, sun-basking or sexual display (Moran & Southwood, 1982).

I have witnessed, though rarely, other species exhibiting apparently unusual behaviour. One example was of the copper underwing *Amphipyra pyramidea* (L.) an arboreal species; I found a larva feeding on prostrate *Cotoneaster horizontalis* in a garden far removed from shrubs and trees at Sparsholt College (VC 11). The most puzzling host association occurred in April 1964, when I collected a disused song thrush's nest, which was 1 m up in a thick hedge at Cullompton (VC 3). In school, the children in my class carefully dismantled the nest to discover its composition. To our surprise there was a noctuid pupa within the base. I retained the pupa and on 24.v.1964 an adult clouded-bordered brindle *Apamea crenata* (Hufn.) emerged. This species, like *P. clavipalpis* is also a ground level feeding species, firstly on the flowers and immature seeds of Poaceae and later on the foliage; the pupa is in a loose cell spun amongst the roots of grasses (Emmet & Heath, 1983). Perhaps the reason for the larva spinning in the bird's nest was that its composition appeared like a tangle of roots. A clue for the *clavipalpis* larva's behaviour might be wood; it has been stated 'the pupa is in a tough cocoon of silk and other available material such as abraded wood and vegetable debris (ibid. p. 281). Was the larva attracted to the base of *Salix* by its woody stem? Why did both individual larvae climb up from ground level? Perhaps both were escaping adverse conditions on the ground.

I have experienced larvae of *P. clavipalpis* feeding well above the ground, because of human activity. On 5.i.1990 I answered a request for help by visiting Mr. & Mrs. Frith's cottage in Chestnut Avenue, Eastleigh (VC 11). They were being inundated by numerous larvae dropping from the thatch and falling down the chimneys. The cottage had been re-thatched the previous year with wheat reed on which, I presumed, many ova of the culprit, *P. clavipalpis*, had been laid. Barry Goater (1974) stated that, 'it was frequent in towns . . . and throughout the agricultural belt, where the larvae could be a minor pest in grain stacks and in growing wheat at harvest (CHD); the larva probably also feeds on wild grasses in chalk pasture.' C.H. Dixon lived at Northbridge Farm, Micheldever just under seven kilometres from where Winokur's larva was found. Changes in agricultural practices have removed this species from wheat and pea crops grown there and elsewhere.

I do agree with Len Winokur that *S. caprea* is a popular food plant for Lepidoptera. In an unpublished paper (1984) produced for the local Wild Life Trust, I compiled a list of food plants of Lepidoptera found in North Hampshire (VC 12) and the number of larval species per plant to show the relative importance of certain

plants to Lepidoptera, as a guide for conservation. The compilation was based on Lepidoptera species listed in Goater (1974), but excluding species with fewer than five specimens recorded and non-breeding migrant species. Food plants were listed from my experience and the literature: Scorer (1913), Stokoe (1948), Allan (1949), Emmet (1988) and Emmet and Heath (1979 & 1983). Top of the list for host trees were *S. caprea* (goat willow) and *Quercus* spp. (deciduous oaks), with 180 species each, followed by *Betula* spp. (birch) 175, and *Crataegus* spp. (hawthorns) 150. – A.H. DOBSON, 282 Britten Road, Basingstoke RG22 4HR.

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***Holcostethus vernalis* (Wolff) (Hem.: Pentatomidae) and *Bathysolen nubilis* (Fallén) (Hem.: Coreidae) in Hampshire**. – On 29 May 2007, I swept an adult male *H.vernalis* from a rough grassy glade in an abandoned orchard in Lock's Heath, South Hampshire (VC11) (SU5006). This appears to be the first record of this species in Hampshire (Bernard Nau, *pers. comm.*), and my second coming after another single male from the former Ore Power Station, Hastings, East Sussex (TQ8210) on 22 September 2003.

On 4 June 2007, I visited part of the old Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough, North Hampshire (VC12) (SU8654), where a large area of black medick *Medicago lupulina* had developed on foundations of a building demolished in 2002. Having found *B. nubilus* in similar places in Essex and Kent in recent years, I was unsurprised to find adults under the first rosette examined. These appear to be the first seen in Hampshire, and a westerly extension to its known range, lying some 35km from Surbiton, where I found it new for Surrey in 1998. JONTY DENTON, 29 Yarnhams Close, Four Marks, Hants, GU34 5DH.